

## Statement by The International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP)

44<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council

*Item 3: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members – Interactive dialogue*

Madam President,

Thousands of years of denial of rights, social exclusion and stigmatisation have left people affected by leprosy amongst the most left behind in our world. Even in countries with a legal framework that *should* protect their rights, there continues to be de facto denial of rights and inequality, especially in the areas of adequate standard of living; inclusion in the community; elimination of stereotypes; and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

For these reasons, ILEP strongly supports the recommended policy framework outlined in Ms Cruz's report. This framework is the natural outworking of the principles and guidelines for the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, which were adopted by this Council in 2010. Sadly, the principles and guidelines are in most cases ignored or overlooked. Our hope is that this framework will enable their implementation in all countries where leprosy is found.

In the sixty countries where we work, ILEP connects with thousands of people affected by leprosy. Over the past three years, we have seen that Ms Cruz has not only raised awareness of leprosy, but also given hope to individuals and organisations of persons affected, worldwide. Through her energy and example, we are hearing new confidence in the voices of people affected by leprosy. In three years, she has made remarkable progress tackling and highlighting the issues faced by one of the most marginalised groups in the world. But there is still much more to be accomplished. This mandate is supported by ILEP, by the Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy, and by organisations of persons affected. On behalf of the leprosy community as a whole, we urge this council to approve the extension of this mandate for a further three years.

Thank you